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The Muslim Home: 40 Recommendations

In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

English Translation Book by Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid

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Introduction

All praise be to Allah, we praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own selves and from our evil deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, no one can lead astray, and whomsoever Allah leaves astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah Alone, with no partner or associate, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

The home is a blessing. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And Allah has made for you in your homes an abode..."[al-Nahl 16:80]

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"Here Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, is mentioning His complete blessing to His slaves: He has given them homes which are a peaceful abode for them, to which they retreat as a haven which covers them and gives them all kinds of benefits."

What does the home represent to each one of us? Is it not the place where he eats, enjoys intimacy with his wife, sleeps and rests? Is it not the place where he can be alone and can meet with his wife and children?

Is the home not the place that offers cover and protection to women? Allah tells us (interpretation of the meaning):

"And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance..."[al-Ahzaab 33:33]

If you think about those who are homeless, who live in shelters, or on the streets, or as refugees scattered in temporary camps, then you will realize the blessing of having a home. If you listen to a distressed homeless person saying, "I have nowhere to settle, no fixed place to stay. Sometimes I sleep in so and so's house, sometimes in a café or park or on the sea-front, and I keep my clothes in my car", then you will realize the disruption that results from not having the blessing of a home.

When Allah punished the Jews of Banu Nadeer, He took away this blessing and expelled them from their homes, as He said (interpretation of the meaning):

"He it is Who drove out the disbelievers among the people of the Scripture (i.e. the Jews of the tribe of Banu al-Nadeer) from their homes at the first gathering."

Then He said:

"...they destroyed their own dwellings with their own hands and the hands of the believers. Then take admonition, O you with eyes (to see)."[al-Hashr59:2]

There are many motives for the believer to pay attention to putting his house in order.

Firstly: protecting himself and his family from the Fire of Hell, and keeping them safe from the burning punishment:

"O you who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who disobey not, (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded." [al-Tahreem 66:6]

Secondly: the great responsibility borne by the head of the household on the Day of Reckoning The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Allah will ask every shepherd (or responsible person) about his flock (those for whom he was responsible), whether he took care of it or neglected it, until He asks a man about his household."

Thirdly: the home is a place to protect oneself, to keep away from evil and to keep one's own evil away from people. It is the refuge prescribed by Islam at times of fitnah (strife, tribulation).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Blessed is the one who controls his tongue, whose house is sufficient for him, and who weeps over his mistakes."

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"There are five things, whoever does one of them, Allah will be with him: visiting the sick, going out for jihad, entering upon his leader with the intention of rebuking and respecting him, or sitting in his home so that the people are safe from him and he is safe from the people."

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"The safety of a man at times of fitnah is in his staying home."

The Muslim can see the benefit of this advice when he is residing in a foreign land where he is unable to change much of the evil around him. Then he will have a refuge which, when he enters it, will protect him from doing haram things or looking at haram things, and will protect his wife from wanton display and unveiling, and will protect his children from bad company.

Fourthly: people usually spend most of their time at home, especially when it is very hot or very cold, when it is raining, early or late in the day, and after finishing work or school, so this time should be spent in worship and halal pursuits, otherwise it will be spent in wrongdoing.

Fifthly and most importantly, paying attention to the home is the most important means of building a Muslim society, because the society is formed of the households and families that form its building blocks. Households form neighborhoods, and neighborhoods form societies. If the building blocks are sound, the society will be based on the laws of Allah, standing firm in the face of enemies and filled with goodness that evil cannot penetrate. Then Muslim homes will produce pillars of society who will reform and guide it aright, such as exemplary dai'yahs, seekers of knowledge, sincere mujahideen, righteous wives, caring mothers and all other types of reformers.

Because this subject is so important, and our homes are full of so many shortcomings and evils and examples of negligence, this begs the very important question: What are the means of reforming our homes?

The following contains advice on this topic. May Allah benefit us from it, and cause the Muslims to focus their efforts on reviving the Muslim home.

All the following advice revolves around two things: achieving our interests, which is by establishing that which is right and good, and warding off evil, by removing that which can cause it or bring it into our homes.

Forming the Household

Making a good choice when choosing a wife:

"And marry those among you who are single (i.e., a man who has no wife and a woman who has no husband) and (also marry) the saalihoon (pious, fit and capable ones) of your (male) slaves and maid-servants (female slaves). If they be

poor, Allah will enrich them out of His Bounty. And Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knowing (about the state of the people)." [al-Noor 24:32]

The head of the household must select a righteous and suitable wife based on the following conditions described in various Ahaadeeth:

"A woman may be married for four things: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty or her religion. Choose the one who is religious, may your hands be rubbed with dust [i.e., may you prosper]!" (Agreed upon).

"This world is all temporary conveniences, and the greatest joy in this life is a righteous wife." (Reported by Muslim, 1468).

"Let every one of you have a thankful heart, a remembering tongue [remembering Allah] and a believing wife who will help him with regard to the Hereafter." (Reported by Ahmad, 5/282, and al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah from Thawbaan. Sahih al-Jaami', 5231).

According to another report: "A righteous wife to help you with your worldly and religious affairs is the best treasure anyone could have." (Reported by al-Bayhaqi. Sahih al-Jaami', 4285).

"Marry one who is loving and fertile, for I will be proud before the other Prophets of your great numbers on the Day of Resurrection." (Reported by Ahmad. Sahih al-Irwa', 6/195).

"I advise you to marry virgins, for their wombs are more fresh, their mouths are more sweet and they are more content with little." According to another report: "... and they are less likely to deceive." (Reported by Ibn Maajah. Al-Silsilah al-Sahih, 623).

Just as a righteous wife is one of the four elements of happiness, so a bad wife is one of the four elements of misery, as it says in the Sahih hadeeth:

"One of (the elements of) happiness is a righteous wife, who when you see her you feel pleased, and when you are away, you feel that you can trust her with regard to herself and your property. And one of (the elements of) misery is a bad wife who when you see her, you feel upset, she keeps attacking you verbally, and when you are away, you do not feel that you can trust her with regard to herself and your property."

On the other hand, it is also essential to look at the situation of the prospective husband who is proposing marriage to the Muslim woman, and to agree to his proposal in accordance with the following conditions:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"If there comes to you one with whose religion and character you are pleased, then marry your daughter [or sister, etc.] to him, otherwise there will be fitnah and great corruption in the land."

All of the above must be achieved through asking the right questions, verifying facts, gathering information and checking sources, so that the home will not be corrupted or destroyed.

"The righteous man and righteous woman together will build a righteous home, because the vegetation of a good land comes forth (easily) by the Permission of its Lord, and that which is bad, brings forth nothing but a little with difficulty..." [al-A'raaf 7:58]

Striving to guide ones wife

If one's wife is righteous, this is a blessing indeed, and this is from the Bounty of Allah. If she is not that righteous, then it is the duty of the head of the household to strive to guide her. Any of the following scenarios may apply:

A man may marry a woman who is not religious in the first place, because he himself is not religious at first, or he may have married her in the hope of guiding her, or under pressure from his relatives, for example. In these cases he must strive hard to guide her.

A man must also realize from the outset that guidance comes from Allah, and that Allah is the One Who reforms people. One of His blessings to his slave Zakariya was, as He said (interpretation of the meaning):

"... and [We] cured his wife for him..."[al-Anbiya' 21:90].

This curing or reforming may have been physical or religious. Ibn 'Abbaas said:

"She was barren and could not have children, then she had a child."

Ataa' said:

"She was harsh of tongue, and Allah reformed her."

There are various means of guiding or reforming ones wife, such as:

- Paying attention to correcting her worship of Allah in all its aspects, as will be discussed in detail below.
- Striving to strengthen her eemaan, such as:
 - o Encouraging her to pray at night (qiyaam al-layl)
 - o Encouraging her to read Qur'an
 - o Encouraging her to memorize adhikaar (remembrance of Allah) and remember the appropriate times and occasions for saying them
 - o Encouraging her to give charity
 - o Encouraging her to read useful Islamic books
 - o Encouraging her to listen to useful Islamic cassettes that can increase knowledge and strengthen eemaan – and continuing to supply her with them.

- o Choosing good, religious friends for her, with whom she can form ties of sisterhood and have good conversations and purposeful visits.
- o Protecting her from evil and blocking off all avenues for it to reach her, by keeping her away from bad companions and bad places.

Creating an Atmosphere of Faith in the Home

Making the home a place for the remembrance of Allah

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"The likeness of a house in which Allah is remembered and the house in which Allah is not remembered is that of the living and the dead, respectively."

We must make our homes places where Allah is remembered in all kinds of ways, whether in our hearts, verbally, during prayer, by reading Qur'an, by discussing Islamic issues, or by reading different kinds of Islamic books.

How many Muslim homes nowadays are dead because there is no remembrance of Allah, as mentioned in the hadeeth. What must they be like when all that is heard therein is the music of Shaytan with instruments and singing, and backbiting, slander and gossip?

What must they be like when they are filled with evil and sin, such as the haram mixing of the sexes and wanton display between relatives who are not mahram or with neighbors who enter the home?

How can the angels enter a home like this? Revive your homes with all kinds of dhikr, may Allah have mercy on you!

What is meant is taking the home as a place of worship?

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And We inspired Moosa and his brother (saying): 'Take dwellings for your people in Egypt, and make your dwellings as places for your worship, and perform al-salah, and give glad tidings to the believers.'"

[Qur'an Yoonus 10:87]

Ibn 'Abbaas said:

"They were commanded to take their dwellings as places of prayer [lit. mosques]."

Ibn Katheer said:

"This – and Allah knows best – was because of the intensity of the tribulation that they were facing from Pharaoh and his people. They were commanded to pray much, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): 'O you who believe! Seek help with patience and prayer...' [al-Baqarah 2:153], and as it was reported in the hadeeth that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), when he was distressed by something, would pray."

This explains the importance of worshipping at home, especially at times when the Muslims are in a position of weakness, as happens in some places where the Muslims cannot pray openly in front of the kuffaar. In this context we may think of the mihraab of Maryam, which was her place of worship, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"... Every time Zakariya entered the mihraab to visit her, he found her supplied with sustenance..."[Aal 'Imraan 3:37]

The Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them) used to be keen to pray at home – apart from the fard or obligatory prayers (which they prayed in congregation in the mosque) – and there is a moving story concerning this.

Mahmood ibn al-Rabee' al-Ansaari reported that 'Utbaan ibn Maalik – who was one of the Companions of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and was one of the Ansaar who had been present at Badr – came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: "I am losing my sight, and I lead my people in prayer. When it rains, the valley between me and them gets flooded and I cannot get to their mosque to lead them in prayer. O Messenger of Allah, I would like you to come to come and pray in my house so that I can take it as a place for prayer." The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "I will do that, in sha Allah."; 'Utbaan said: "The next day the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and Abu Bakr came in the morning. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked for permission to enter, and I gave him permission. He did not sit down until he entered the house, then he said, 'Where would you like me to pray in your house?' I showed him a corner of the house, then the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stood up, said Takbeer, and we stood in a row behind him, and he prayed two rak'ahs and gave the salaam at the end of the prayer." (Reported by al-Bukhari, al-Fath, 1/519)

Spiritual training for the members of the household

Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to pray qiyaam at night, and when he prayed with him he would say, 'Get up and pray with me, O 'Aa'ishah'" (Reported by Muslim, Muslim bi Sharh al-Nawawi, 6/23).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "May Allah have mercy on a man who gets up at night and prays, then he wakes up his wife to pray, and if she refuses he throws water in her face." (Reported by Ahmad and Abu Dawood. Sahih al-Jaami', 3488).

Encouraging the women of one's household to give charity is another means of increasing faith. This is something very important which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be

upon him) encouraged, when he said, "O women! Give in charity, for I have seen that you form the majority of the inhabitants of Hell." (Reported by al-Bukhari, al-Fath, 1/405).

One of the new ideas is to have a box at home for donations to the poor and needy: whatever is put in the box belongs to them, because it is their vessel in the Muslim home.

If the family members see an example among them fasting on al-Ayyaam al-Beed (the 13th, 14th and 15th of each Hijri month), Mondays and Thursdays, Taasoo'aa' and 'Aashooraa' (the 9th and 10th of Muharram), 'Arafaah, and frequently in Muharram and Sha'baan, this will be a motive for them to do likewise.

Paying attention to adhkaar and Sunnah du'a's that have to do with the home

Adkhaar for entering the home:

Muslim reported in his Sahih that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"When any one of you enters his home and mentions the Name of Allah when he enters and when he eats, the Shaytan says: 'You have no place to stay and nothing to eat here.' If he enters and does not mention the name of Allah when he enters, [the Shaytan] says, 'You have a place to stay.' If he does not mention the name of Allah when he eats, [the Shaytan says], 'You have a place to stay and something to eat.'" (Reported by Imam Ahmad, al-Musnad, 3/346; Muslim, 3/1599).

Abu Dawood reported in his Sunan that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"If a man goes out of his house and says, 'Bismillaah, tawakkaltu 'ala Allah, laa hawla wa laa quwwata illaa Billaah (In the name of Allah, I put my trust in Allah, there is no help and no strength except in Allah),' it will be said to him, 'This will take care of you, you are guided, you have what you need and you are protected.' The Shaytan will stay away from him, and another shaytan will say to him, 'What can you do with a man who is guided, provided for and protected?'" (Reported by Abu Dawood and al-Tirmidhi. Sahih al-Jaami', no. 499)

Siwaak

Imam Muslim reported in his Sahih that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

"When the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) entered his house, the first thing he would do was use siwaak." (Reported by Muslim, Kitaab al-Tahaarah, chapter 15, no. 44).

Continuously reciting Surah al-Baqarah in the house to ward off the Shaytan

There are a number of Ahaadeeth concerning this, such as:

the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not make your houses into graves. The Shaytan flees from a house in which Surah al-Baqarah is recited." (Reported by Muslim, 1/539)

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Recite Surah al-Baqarah in your houses, for the Shaytan does not enter a house in which Surah al-Baqarah is recited." (Reported by al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak. 1/561; Sahih al-Jaami', 1170).

Concerning the virtues of the last two aayaat of this soorah, and the effect of reciting them in one's house, he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Allah wrote a document two thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth, which is kept near the Throne, and He revealed two aayaat of it with which He concluded Surah al-Baqarah. If they are recited in a house for three consecutive nights, the Shaytan will not approach it." (Reported by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad, 4/274, and others. Sahih al-Jaami', 1799).

Islamic Knowledge in the Home

Teaching the family

This is an obligation which the head of the household must undertake, in obedience to the command of Allah (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones..." [al-Tahreem 66:6]

This aayah is the basic principle regarding the teaching and upbringing of one's family, and enjoining them to do what is good and forbidding them to do what is evil. There follow some of the comments of the mufasssireen on this aayah, in so far as it pertains to the duties of the head of the household.

Qutaadah said:

"He should command them to obey Allah, and forbid them to disobey Him, and direct them in accordance with the commands of Allah, and help them to do that."

Dahhaak and Muqaatil said:

"It is the Muslim's duty to teach his family, including relatives and female slaves, what Allah has enjoined upon them and what He has forbidden."

'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

"Teach them and discipline them."

Al-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"We must teach our children and wives the religion and goodness, and whatever they need of good manners. If the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to urge the teaching of female servants, who were slaves, what do you think about your children and wives, who are free?"

Al-Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his Sahih:

"Chapter: a man's teaching his female slaves and wife."

Then he quoted the hadeeth of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

"There are three who will have two rewards: ... a man who has a female slave whom he teaches good manners and teaches her well, and teaches her knowledge, and teaches her well, then he frees her and marries her: he will have two rewards."

Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said, commenting on this hadeeth:

"The chapter heading refers specifically to female slaves, and to wives by analogy, i.e., teaching one's free wife about her duties towards Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger is more clearly essential than teaching one's female slaves."

In the midst of all a man's activities, work and other commitments, he may forget to allow himself time for teaching his wife. One solution to this is to allocate some time for the family, and even for others such as relatives, to hold a study-circle at home. He can let everyone know the time and encourage them to come regularly, so that it will be an ongoing commitment for him and for them. Something similar happened at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Al-Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"Chapter: can the women be given a day exclusively for them to seek knowledge?"

and quoted the hadeeth of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him):

"The women said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): 'The men always crowd us out and we cannot reach you, so set aside a day for us when we can come to you.' So he set aside a day when he would meet them and teach them."

Ibn Hajar said:

"A similar report was narrated by Sahl ibn Abi Saalih from Abu Hurayrah, according to which [the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)] said: 'Your appointment is in the house of so and so,' and he came to them and spoke to them."

What we learn from this is that women should be taught in their houses, and we see how keen the women of the Sahaabah were to learn. Directing teaching efforts to men alone, and not to women, is a serious shortcoming on the part of dai'yahs and heads of households.

Some readers may ask, suppose we set aside a day, and tell our families about it – what should we study in these gatherings? Where do we begin?

I suggest that you begin with a simple program to teach your family in general, and the women in particular, using the following books:

- The tafseer of al-'Allaamah Ibn Sa'di, entitled Tayseer al-Kareem al-Rahmaan fi Tafseer Kalaam al-Mannaan, which is published in seven volumes and is written in an easy style; you can read it or teach some soorahs and passages from it.

- Riyaadh al-Saaliheen – you could discuss the ahaadeeth quoted, along with the footnotes and the lessons learned from them. You could also refer to the book Nuzhat al-Muttaqeen.
- Hasan al-Uswah bima'a thubita 'an Allahi wa Rasoolihi fi'l-Nuswah, by al-'Allaamah Siddeeq Hasan Khaan.

It is also important to teach women some of the ahkaam of fiqh, such as the rulings on tahaarah (purity) and menstrual and post-partum bleeding, salah, Zakaah, siyam (fasting) and hajj, if she is able to go; some of the rulings on food and drink, clothing and adornment, the Sunan al-fitrah, rulings on maharim (who is a mahram relative and who is not), rulings on singing and photography, and so on. Among the important sources of such information are the fatwas (rulings or edicts) of the scholars, such as the collections of fatwas by Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz and Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen, and other scholars, whether they are written fatwas or fatwas recorded on tapes.

Another matter that may be included in a syllabus for teaching women and family members is reminding them of lessons or public lectures given by trustworthy scholars and seekers of knowledge which they can attend, so they can have a variety of excellent sources for learning. We should not forget either the radio programs of Idhaa'at al-Qur'an al-Kareem; another means of teaching is reminding family members of the particular days when women can attend Islamic bookstores, and taking them there, within the guidelines of sharee'ah [i.e., proper hijab, etc.]

Start building an Islamic "library" in your home

Another thing that will help in teaching your family and letting them develop a understanding of their religion and help them adhere to its rules, is having one's own Islamic library at home. It does not have to be extensive; what matters is choosing good books, putting them in a place where they are readily accessible, and encouraging family members to read them.

You could put books in a clean and tidy corner of the living room and in a suitable place in a bedroom or guest room; this will make it easy for any member of the family to read constantly.

In order to build a library properly – and Allah loves things to be done properly – you should include references so that family members can research various matters and children can use them for their studies. You should also include books of varying levels, so that old and young, men and women can all use them. You should also have books for giving to guests, children's friends and family visitors, but try to get books that are attractively presented, edited properly and with the sources and classification of the Ahaadeeth properly given. You can make the most of Islamic bookstores and exhibitions to build a home library, after

consulting and seeking advice from those who have experience in the field of books. One way in which you can help family members to find a book when they want it is to organize the books according to subject, with books of Tafseer on one shelf, books of hadeeth on another, fiqh on a third, and so on. One of the family members could also compile alphabetical or subject indexes of the library, to make it easier to look for books.

Many of those who want to start a home library may ask for titles of Islamic books. Here are a few suggestions: Many of these books have now been translated into english.

Tafseer:

- Tafseer Ibn Katheer
- Tafseer Ibn Sa'di
- Zubdat al-Tafseer by al-Ashkar
- Badaa'i' al-Tafseer by Ibn al-Qayyim
- Usool al-Tafseer by Ibn 'Uthaymeen
- Lamahaat fi 'Uloom al-Qur'an by Muhammad al-Sabbaagh

Hadeeth

- Sahih al-Kalim al-Tayyib
- 'Aml al-Muslim fi'l-Yawm wa'l-Laylah (or: Al-Sahih al-Musnad min Adhkaar al-Yawm wa'l-Laylah)
- Riyaadh al-Saaliheen and its commentary Nuzhat al-Muttaqeen
- Mukhtasar Sahih al-Bukhari by al-Zubaydi
- Mukhtasar Sahih Muslim by al-Mundhiri and al-Albaani
- Sahih al-Jaami' al-Sagheer
- Da'eef al-Jaami' al-Sagheer
- Sahih al-Targheeb wa'l-Tarheeb
- Al-Sunnah wa Makaanatuhaa fi'l-Tashree'
- Qawaa'id wa fawaa'id min al-Arba'een al-Nawawiyyah by Naazim Sultaan

Aqeedah

- Fath al-Majeed Sharh Kitaab al-Tawheed (edited by al-Arnaa'oot)
- A'laam al-Sunnah al-Manshoorah by al-Hakami (ed.)
- Sharh al-'Aqeedah al-Tahhaawiyyah, edited by al-Albaani
- The series on 'Aqeedah by Umar Sulaymaan al-Ashqar in 8 parts
- Ashraat al-Saa'ah by Dr. Yoosuf al-Waabil

Fiqh

- Manaar al-Sabeel by Ibn Duwiyaaan
- Irwa' al-Ghaleel by al-Albaani
- Zaad al-Ma'aad
- al-Mughni by Ibn Qudaamah
- Fiqh al-Sunnah [also available in English translation]
- Al-Mulakhkhas al-Fiqhi by Saalih al-Fawzaan
- Collections of fatwas by different scholars ('Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz, Muhammad Saalih al-'Uthaymeen, 'Abd-Allah ibn Jibreen)
- Sifat Salah al-Nabi (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) by Shaykh al-Albaani and Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz [available in English under the title The Prophet's Prayer Described]
- Mukhtasar Ahkaam al-Janaa'iz by al-Albaani
- Good manners and purification of the soul:
- Tahdheeb Madaarij al-Saalikeen
- Al-Fawaa'id
- Al-Jawaab al-Kaafi
- Tareeq al-Hijratayn wa Baab al-Sa'aadatayn
- Al-Waabil al-Sayib
- Raafi' al-Kalim al-Tayyib by Ibn al-Qayyim
- Lataa'if al-Ma'aarif by Ibn Rajab
- Tahdheeb Maw'izat al-Mu'mineen
- Ghadhaa' al-Albaab
- Seerah and biographies
- Al-Bidaayah wa'l-Nihaayah by Ibn Katheer
- Mukhtasar al-Shamaa'il al-Muhammadiyah by al-Tirmidhi, abridged by al-Albaani
- Al-Raheeq al-Makhtoom by al-Mubaarakpoori [available in English translation]
- Al-'Awaasim min al-Qawaasim by Ibn al-'Arabi, ed. by al-Khateeb and al-Istanbuli
- Al-Mujtama' al-Madani (2 vols.) by Shaykh Akram al-'Umari [available in English under the title Madinan Society at the Time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)]
- Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'
- Minhaj Kitaabat al-Taareekh al-Islaami by Muhammad ibn Saamil al-Salami

There are many other good books on various topics, such as those by:

- Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhaab
- Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Naasir al-Sa'di
- Shaykh 'Umar Sulaymaan ibn Ashqar

- Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Ismaa'eel al-Muqaddim
- Prof. Muhammad Muhammad Husayn
- Shaykh Muhammad Jameel Zayno
- Prof. Husayn al-'Awayishah's books on al-Raqaa'iq (topics to soften the heart and strengthen eemaan)
- Al-Eemaan by Muhammad Na'eem Yaaseen
- Al-Walaa' wa'l-Baraa' by Shaykh Muhammad Sa'eed al-Qahtaani [available in English translation]
- Al-Inhiraafaat al-'Aqdiyyah fi'l-Qarnayn al-Thaani 'Ashara wa'l-Thaalith 'Ashara by 'Ali ibn Bukhayt al-Zahraani
- Al-Muslimoon wa Zaahirat al-Hazeemah al-Nafsiyyah by 'Abd-Allah al-Shabaanah
- Al-Mar'ah bayn al-Fiqh wa'l-Qaanoon by Mustafa al-Sibaa'i
- Al-Usrah al-Muslimah amaam al-video wa'l-tilifiziyyon by Marwaan Kijik
- Al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah l'daadaatuhaa wa mas'ooliyaatuhaa by Ahmad Abu Bateen
- Mas'ooliyat al-Abb al-Muslim fi Tarbiyat Waladihi by 'Adnaan Baahaarith
- hijab al-Muslimah by Ahmad al-Baaraazi
- Wa Jaa'a Dawr al-Maajoos by 'Abd-Allah Muhammad al-Ghareeb
- Books by Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd
- Abhaath al-Shaykh Mashoor Hasan Salmaan

There are many other useful, good books – what we have mentioned is only by way of example, and is by no means a complete list. There are also many useful pamphlets and booklets, but it would take too long to list everything. The Muslim should consult others and think hard. Whomever Allah wishes good for, He helps him to understand His religion.

Home audio library

Having a cassette player in every home may be used for good or for evil. How can we use it in a manner that is pleasing to Allah?

One of the ways in which we can achieve this is to have a home audio library containing good Islamic tapes by scholars, fuqaha', lecturers, and preachers.

Listening to tapes of Qur'an recitation by some Imam's, for example those recorded during Taraaweeth prayers, will have a great impact on family members, whether by impressing upon them the meanings of the Revelation, or by helping them to memorize Qur'an because of repeated listening. It will also protect them by letting them hear Qur'anic recitation rather than the music and singing of the shaytan, because it is not right for the words of al-Rahman (Allah) to be mixed with the music of the Shaytan in the heart of the believer.

Tapes of fatwas may have a great effect on family members and help them to understand various rulings, which will have an impact on their daily lives.

Muslims must also pay attention to the sources from which they take fatwas, because this is the matter of religion, so look to where you take your religion from. You should take it from someone who is known to be righteous and pious, who bases his fatwas on sound Ahaadeeth, who is not fanatical in his adherence to a Madhab, who follows sound evidence and adheres to a middle path without being either extreme or too lenient. Ask an expert.

"... Allah, Most Gracious: ask, then about Him of any acquainted (with such things)." [al-Furqan 25:59]

Listening to lectures by those who are striving to raise the awareness of the ummah, establish proof and denounce evil, is very important for establishing individual personalities in the Muslim home.

There are many tapes and lectures, and the Muslim needs to know the features of the sound methodology so as to distinguish sound lecturers from others and look for their tapes, which they can listen to with confidence. Among these features are:

- The lecturer should be a believer in the 'Aqeedah of, Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, adhering to the Sunnah. The speaker should be moderate, neither extremist nor lenient.
- He should base his talks on sound Ahaadeeth, and beware of weak and fabricated Ahaadeeth.
- He should have insight and understanding as to people's situations and the realities of the ummah, and should offer the appropriate remedy for any problem, giving the people what they need.
- He should speak the truth as much as he can, and not utter falsehood or please the people by angering Allah.

We often find that tapes for children have a great influence on them, whether by helping them to memorize Qur'an by listening to a young reader, or du'a's to be recited at various times of day and night, or Islamic manners, or nasheeds (religious "songs" with no instrumental accompaniment except the duff) with a useful message, and so on.

Putting tapes in drawers in an organized fashion will make it easier to find them, and will also protect them from getting damaged or from being played with by young children. We should distribute good tapes by giving or lending them to others after listening to them. Having a recorder in the kitchen will be very useful for the lady of the house, and having a recorder in the bedroom will help a person make good use of time until the last moments of the day.

Inviting good and righteous people and seekers of knowledge to visit the home.

"My Lord! Forgive me, and my parents, and him who enters my home as a believer, and all the believing men and women..." [Nooh 71:28]

If people of faith enter your home, it will increase in light (noor), and will bring many benefits because of your conversations and discussion with them. The bearer of musk will either give you some, or you will buy from him, or you will find that he has a pleasant scent. When children, brothers and parents sit with such visitors, and women listen from behind a curtain or screen to what is said, this offers an educational experience to all. If you bring good people into your home, by doing so you keep bad people from coming in a wreaking havoc.

Learning the Islamic rulings with regard to houses.

These include:

Praying in the house

With regard to men, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"The best of prayer is a man's prayer in his house – apart from the prescribed prayers." (Reported by al-Bukhari, al-Fath, no. 731)

It is obligatory to pray (the five daily prayers) in the mosque, except if there is a valid excuse. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said:

"A man's voluntary prayers in his house will bring more reward than his voluntary prayers at other people's places, just as his obligatory prayers with the people are better than his obligatory prayers alone." (Reported by Ibn Abi Shaybah. Sahih al-Jaami', 2953)

With regard to women, the deeper inside her home her place of prayer is, the better, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"The best prayer for women is [that offered] in the furthest part of their houses." (Reported by al-Tabaraani. Sahih al-Jaami', 3311)

A man should not be led in prayer in his own home, and no one should sit in the place where the master of the house usually sits, except with his permission. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"A man should not be led in prayer in his place of authority, and no one should sit in his place in his house, except with his permission." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, no. 2772)

I.e., no one should go forward to lead him in prayer, even if they recite Qur'an better than he does, in a place that he owns or where he has authority, such as a householder in his home, or an Imam in a mosque. Similarly, it is not permitted to sit in the private spot of the head of the master of the house, such as a bed or mattress, etc., except with his permission.

Seeking permission to enter

"O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and greeted those in them, that is better for you, in order that you may remember. And if you find no one therein, still, enter not until permission has been

given. And if you are asked to go back, go back, for it is purer for you. And Allah is All-Knower of what you do." [al-Noor 24:27-28]

"... so enter houses through their proper doors..." [al-Baqarah 2:189]

It is permissible to enter houses that are empty if one has some legitimate business there, such as a house prepared for guests.

"There is no sin on you that you enter (without taking permission) houses uninhabited (i.e., not possessed by anybody), (when) you have any interest in them. And Allah has knowledge of what you reveal and what you conceal." [al-Noor 24:29]

Not feeling too shy to eat in the houses of friends and relatives, and in houses of friends and relatives and others to which one has the keys, if they have no objection to that.

"There is no restriction on the blind, nor any restriction on the lame, nor any restriction on the sick, nor on yourselves, if you eat from your houses, or the houses of your fathers, or the houses of your mothers, or the houses of your brothers, or the houses of your sisters, or the houses of your father's brothers, or the houses of your father's sisters, or the houses of your mother's brothers, or the houses of your mother's sisters, or (from that) whereof you hold keys, or (from the house) of a friend. No sin on you whether you eat together or apart..." [al-Noor 24:61]

Telling children and servants not to barge in to the parents' bedroom without permission at the times when people usually sleep, i.e., before Fajr, at siesta time and after 'Isha', lest they see something inappropriate. If they see something accidentally at other times, this is forgivable, because they are tawwaafeen (those who go about in the house) and it is difficult to stop them. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Let your legal slaves and slave-girls, and those among you who have not come to the age of puberty ask your permission (before they come to your presence) on three occasions: before Fajr prayer, and while you put off your clothes for the noonday (rest), and after the 'Isha prayer. (These) three times are of privacy for you; other than these times there is no sin on you or on them to move about, - attending (helping) you each other. Thus Allah makes clear the ayat (verses of this Qur'an, showing proofs for the legal aspects of permission for visits, etc.) to you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise." [al-Noor 24:57]

It is forbidden to look into the houses of other people without their permission. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Whoever looks into someone's house without their permission, put his eyes out, and there is no diyah or qisaas [blood money or retaliation] in this case." (Reported by Ahmad, al-Musnad, 2/385; Sahih al-Jaami, 6046)

A woman who has been divorced by talaq for a first or second time [and could still go back to her husband] should not leave or be made to leave her home during the 'iddah, and she should still be supported financially. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them at their 'iddah (prescribed periods), and count (accurately) their 'iddah (periods). And fear Allah your Lord (O Muslims), and turn them not out of their (husband's) homes, nor shall they (themselves) leave, except in case they are guilty of some open illegal sexual intercourse. And those are the set limits of Allah. And whoever transgresses the set limits of Allah, then indeed he has wronged himself. You (the one who divorces his wife) know not, it may be that Allah will afterward bring some new thing to pass (i.e., to return her back to you, if this as the first or second divorce)." [al-Talaq 65:1]

It is permissible for a man to forsake his rebellious wife inside or outside the home, according to the interests prescribed by sharee'ah in any given case. The evidence for forsaking her inside the home is the ayah (interpretation of the meaning): "... refuse to share their beds..." [al-Nisa' 4:34]. With regard to forsaking women outside the home, this is what happened when the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forsook his wives, leaving them in their apartments and staying in a room outside the houses of his wives. (Reported by al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Talaq, Baab fi'l-Eelaa').

One should not stay alone overnight in the house. Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade being alone and said that a man should not stay overnight alone or travel alone. (Reported by Ahmad in al-Musnad, 2/91). This is because of the feelings of loneliness etc., that come from being alone, and also because of the possibility of attacks by enemies or robbers, or the possibility of sickness. If one has a companion, he can help fight off attacks, and can help if one gets sick. (See al-Fath al-Rabbaani, 5/64).

Not sleeping on the roof of a house that has no protecting wall, lest one fall. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"Whoever sleeps on the roof of a house that has no protecting wall, nobody is responsible for what happens to him." (Reported by Abu Dawood, al-Sunan, no. 5041; Sahih al-Jaami, 6113; its commentary is in 'Awn al-Ma'bood, 13/384)

This is because one who is asleep may roll over in his sleep, and if there is no wall he may fall off the roof and be killed. In such a case, nobody would be to blame for his death; or his negligence would cause Allah to lift His protection from him, because he did not take the necessary precautions. The hadeeth may mean either.

Pet cats do not make vessels naajis (impure) if they drink from them, or make food naajis if they eat from it. 'Abd-Allah ibn Abi Qutaadah reported from his father that water was put

out for him to make wudoo', and a cat came and lapped at the water. He took the water and did wudoo' with it, and they said, "O Abu Qutaadah! The cat drank from it." He said, I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

'Cats are part of the household, and they are among those who go around in your houses.' (Reported by Ahmad in al-Musnad, 5/309; Sahih al-Jaami', 3694)

According to another report he said:

"They [cats] are not naajis; they are among those who go around [al-tawwaafeen wa'l-tawwaafaat – refers to children, servants, etc.] in your houses." (Reported by Ahmad in al-Musnad, 5/309; Sahih al-Jaami', 2437)

Knowing the advantages of khushoo' in Salah

These include:

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"There is no Muslim man who, when the time for a prescribed prayer comes, he does wudoo' properly, has the proper attitude of khushoo', and bows properly, but it will be an expiation for all his previous sins, so long as they were not major sins (kabeerah). And this is the case for life" (Reported by Muslim, 1/206, no. 7/4/2)

The reward recorded is in proportion to the degree of khushoo', as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"A slave may pray and have nothing recorded for it except a tenth of it, or a ninth, or an eighth, or a seventh, or a sixth, or a fifth, or a quarter, or a third, or a half." (Reported by Imam Ahmad; Sahih al-Jaami', 1626).

Only the parts of his prayer where he focused and concentrated properly will be of any avail to him. It was reported that Ibn 'Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

"You will only have from your prayer that which you focused on."

Sins will be forgiven if you concentrate properly and have full khushoo', as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"When a slave stands and prays, all his sins are brought and placed on his head and shoulders. Every time he bows or prostrates, some of them fall from him." (Reported by al-Bayhaqi in al-Sunan al-Kubraa, 3/10; see also Sahih al-Jaami')

Al-Manaawi said: "What is meant is that every time a pillar (essential part) of the prayer is completed, part of his sins fall from him, until when he finishes his prayer, all his sins will be removed. This is in a prayer where all the conditions are met and the essential parts are complete. What we understand from the words "slave" and "stands" is that he is standing before the King of Kings [Allah] in the position of a humble slave." (Reported by al-Bayhaqi in al-Sunan al-Kubraa, 3/10; see also Sahih al-Jaami')

The one who prays with khushoo' will feel lighter when he finishes his prayer, as if his burdens have been lifted from him. He will feel at ease and refreshed, so that he will wish he had not stopped praying, because it is such a source of joy and comfort for him in this world. He will keep feeling that he is in a constricting prison until he starts to pray again; he will find comfort in prayer instead of wanting just to get it over and done with. Those who love prayer say: we pray and find comfort in our prayer, just as their leader, example and Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "O Bilaal, let us find comfort in prayer." He did not say "Let us get it over and done with."- The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "My joy has been made in prayer." So whoever finds his joy in prayer, how can he bear to look for joy anywhere else, or to keep away from it? (Al-Waabil al-Sayib, 37).

Striving to offer du'a' at the appropriate times during the prayer, especially in sujood

There is no doubt that talking to Allah, humbling oneself before Him, asking things from Him and earnestly seeking His help, all help to strengthen the slave's ties to his Lord and increase his khushoo'. Du'a' is an act of worship, and we are commanded to make du'a'. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "... call upon Him in humility and in secret..." [al-An'aam 6:63]. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever does not call on Allah, Allah will be angry with him." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, Kitaab al-Da'waat, 1/426; classed as hasan in Sahih al-Tirmidhi, 2686).

It was reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to make du'a' at specific places in the prayer, i.e., in sujood, between the two prostration's and after the Tashahhud. The greatest of these is in sujood, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "The closest that the slave can be to his Lord is when he is prostrating, so increase your du'a' [at that time]." (Reported by Muslim, Kitaab al-Salah, Baab maa yuqaalu fi'l-rukoo' wa'l-sujood. No. 215). And he said: "... As for sujood, strive hard to make du'a' in it, for it is bound to be answered for you." (Reported by Muslim, Kitaab al-Salah, Baab al-Nahy 'an qiraa'at al-Qur'an fi'l rukoo' wa'l-sujood, no. 207).

One of the du'a's which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to recite in his sujood was: "Allahumma'ghfir li dhanbi diqqahu wa jillahu wa awwalahu wa aakhirahu wa 'alaaniyatahu wa sirrahu (O Allah, forgive me my sins, the minor and the major, the first and the last, the open and the hidden)." (Reported by Muslim, Kitaab al-Salah, Baab ma yuqaalu fi'l-rukoo' wa'l-sujood, no. 216). He also used to say, "Allahumma'ghfir li maa asrartu wa maa a'lantu (O Allah, forgive me what I have done in secret and done openly)." (Reported by al-Nisaa'i, al-Mujtabaa, 2/569; Sahih al-Jaami', 1067).

One of the things that he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to recite after the Tashahhud is what we learn from the hadeeth: "When any one of you finishes the Tashahhud, let him seek refuge with Allah from four things, from the punishment of Hell,

from the punishment of the grave, from the trials (fitnah) of life and death, and from the evil of the Dajjal ('Antichrist')." He used to say,

"Allahumma innee a'oodhu bika min sharri maa 'amiltu wa min sharri maa lam a'mal (O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the evil of what I have done and the evil of what I have not done)."

"Allahumma haasibni hisaaban yaseeran (O Allah, make my accounting easy)."

He taught Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq (may Allah be pleased with him) to say, "Allahumma innee zalamtu nafsi zulman katheeran, wa la yaghfir al-dhunooba illa anta, faghfir li maghfiratan min 'indaka warhamni innaka anta al-Ghafoor al-Raheem (O Allah, I have wronged myself very much, and no one can forgive sin but You. Grant me forgiveness from You and have mercy on me, for You are the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful)."

He heard a man saying in his Tashahhud: "Allahumma inne as'aluka yaa Allah al-Ahad al-Samad alladhi lam yalid wa lam yoolad wa lam yakum lahu kufuwan ahad an taghfir li dhunoobi innaka anta'l-Ghafoor al-Raheem (O Allah, I ask You O Allah, the One, the Self-Sufficient Master, Who begets not neither is begotten, and there is none like unto Him, to forgive me my sins, for You are the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful)." He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to his companions: "He has been forgiven, he has been forgiven."

He heard another man saying, "Allahumma innee as'aluka bi-anna laka'l-hamd, laa ilaaha ill anta wahdaka laa shareeka lak al-Mannaan yaa badee' al-samawaati wa'l-ard, yaa dhaa'l-jalaali wa'l-ikraam, ya hayyu yaa qayyoom, innee as'aluka al-jannah wa a'oodhu bika min al-naar (O Allah, I ask You as all praise is due to You, there is no god but You Alone, with no partner or associate, the Bestower, O Originator of the heavens and earth, O Possessor of Glory and Honour, O Ever-Living, O Self-Sustaining, I ask You for Paradise and I seek refuge with You from Hell)." The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to his companions: "Do you know by what did he ask Allah?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, he asked Allah by His greatest Name (ismuhu'l-a'zam) which, when He is called by it, He responds, and if He is asked by it, He gives."

The last thing he would say between the Tashahhud and the Tasleem was:

"Allahumma'aghfir li maa qaddamtu wa ma akhkhartu wa maa asrartu wa maa a'lantu wa maa asraftu wa maa anta a'lam bihi minni anta'l-muqaddim wa anta'l-mu'akhkhir, laa ilaaha illa anta (O Allah, forgive me what I have done in the past, and what I will do in the future, and what I have concealed, and what I have done openly, and what I have exceeded in, whatever You know about more than I. You are the Bringer-Forward, and You are the Delayer, there is no god except You)." (These du'a's and others, along with their isnaads, are to be found in Sifat al-Salah by al-'Allaamah al-Albaani, p.163, 11th edn.)

Memorizing du'a's like these will solve the problem that some people have of remaining silent behind the Imam when they have finished the Tashahhud because they do not know what they should say.

Adhkaar to be recited after prayer

These also help to strengthen khushoo' in the heart and reinforce the blessings and benefits of the prayer.

Without a doubt, one of the best ways of preserving and protecting a good action is to follow it up with another. So the one who thinks about the adhkaar that come after the prayer will find that they begin with seeking forgiveness three times, as if the worshipper is seeking forgiveness from his Lord for any shortcomings that may have occurred in his prayer or his khushoo'. It is also important to pay attention to naafil (supererogatory) prayers, because they make up for anything lacking in the fard (obligatory) prayers, including any failure with regard to khushoo'.

Having discussed things that help us to have khushoo', we now move on to a discussion of meetings at home.

Meetings at Home

Removing anything that may distract the worshipper

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: " 'Aa'ishah had a decorated, colourful curtain which she used to cover the side of her house. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to her, 'Take it away from me, because its decorations keep distracting me when I pray.'" (Reported by al-Bukhari, Fath al-Baari, 10/391).

Al-Qaasim reported that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) had a cloth with decorations on it, which she used to cover a small sunken alcove (used for sleeping or storage).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to pray facing it, and he said, 'Take it away from me, because its decorations keep distracting me when I pray.' So she took it away and made pillows out of it." (Reported by Muslim in his Sahih, 3/1668).

Another indication of this is the fact that when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) entered the Ka'bah to pray in it, he saw two ram's horns. When he had prayed, he told 'Uthmaan al-Hajabi, "I forgot to tell you to cover the horns, because there should not be anything in the House to distract the worshipper." (Reported by Abu Dawood, 2030; Sahih al-Jaami', 2504).

This also includes avoiding praying in places where people pass through, or where there is a lot of noise and voices of people talking, or where they are engaging in conversations, arguments etc., or where there are visual distractions.

One should also avoid praying in places that are very hot or very cold, if possible. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us to delay praying Zuhr in summer

until the hottest part of the day was over. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "Praying when it is intensely hot prevents a person from having the proper khushoo' and presence of mind, and he does his worship reluctantly, so the Prophet wisely told them to delay praying until the heat had lessened somewhat, so that they could pray with presence of mind and thus achieve the purpose of prayer, i.e., having khushoo' and turning to Allah." (Al-Waabil al-Sayib, Daar al-Bayaan edn., p.22)

Not praying in a garment that has decorations, writing, bright colours or pictures that will distract the worshipper

'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stood up to pray wearing a checkered shirt, and he looked at the patterns in it. When he had finished his prayer, he said, "Take this shirt to Abu Jaham ibn Hudhayfah and bring me an anbajaani (a garment with no decorations or checks), because it distracted me when I was praying." According to another report: "These checks distracted me." According to another report: "He had a checkered shirt, which used to distract him whilst he was praying." (Reports in Sahih Muslim, no. 556, part 3/391).

It is better not to pray in a garment that has pictures on it, and we should be especially careful to avoid garments with pictures of animate beings, like many garments that are widely available nowadays.

Not praying when there is food prepared that one wants to eat

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not pray when there is food prepared." (Reported by Muslim, no. 560).

If food has been prepared and served, or if it is offered, a person should eat first, because he will not be able to concentrate properly and have khushoo' if he leaves it and gets up to pray when he is wanting to eat. He should not even hasten to finish eating, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If the dinner is served and the time for prayer comes, eat dinner before praying Salaat al-Maghrib, and do not rush to finish your meal." According to another report: "If dinner has been put out and the iqaamah has been given for prayer, eat dinner first and do not rush to finish it." (Agreed upon. Al-Bukhari, Kitaab al-Aadhan, Baab idhaa hadara al-ta'aamu wa uqeemat al-Salah; Muslim, no. 557-559).

Not praying when one needs to answer the call of nature

No doubt one of the things that can prevent proper khushoo' is praying when one needs to go to the washroom. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade praying when one is suppressing the urge to urinate or defecate. (Reported by Ibn Maajah in his Sunan, no. 617; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 6832).

If anyone is in this position, he should first go to the bathroom and answer the call of nature, even if he misses whatever he misses of the congregational prayer, because the

Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If any one of you needs to go to the toilet, and the prayer has begun, he should go to the toilet first." (Reported by Abu Dawood, no. 88; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 299)

If this happens to a person whilst he is praying, he should stop praying, go and answer the call of nature, purify himself then pray, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "There is no prayer when there is food prepared or if one is suppressing the urge to expel waste matter." (Sahih Muslim, no. 560). Without a doubt, this trying to suppress the urge takes away khushoo'. This ruling also applies to suppressing the urge to pass wind.

Not praying when one feels sleepy

Anas ibn Maalik said, "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If any one of you feels sleepy when he is praying, he should sleep until he [is rested enough to] know what he is saying," i.e., he should take a nap until he no longer feels drowsy. (Reported by al-Bukhari, no. 210).

This may happen when one is praying qiyaam al-layl, at the time when prayers are answered, and a person may pray against himself without realizing it. This hadeeth also includes fard prayers, when a person is confident that he will still have enough time to pray after taking a nap. (Fath al-Baari, Sharh Kitaab al-Wudoo', Baab al-wudoo' min al-nawm).

Not praying behind someone who is talking (or sleeping)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade this; he said: "Do not pray behind one who is sleeping or one who is talking." (Reported by Abu Dawood, no. 694; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 375. He said, a hasan hadeeth).- because one who is talking will distract the worshipper with his talk, and one who is sleeping may expose something that will distract the worshipper.

Al-Khattaabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "As for praying behind people who are talking, al-Shaafa'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal considered this to be makrooh, because their talk distracts the worshipper from his prayer." ('Awn al-Ma'bood, 2/388).

As regards not praying behind someone who is sleeping, a number of scholars thought that the evidence for this was weak (including Abu Dawood in his Sunan, Kitaab al-Salah, Tafree' Abwaab al-Witr, Baab al-Du'a', and Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Baari, Sharh Baab al-Salah khalf al-Naa'im, Kitaab al-Salah).

Al-Bukhari, may Allah have mercy on him, quoted the hadeeth of 'Aa'ishah in his Sahih, Baab al-Salah khalf al-Naa'im: "The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to pray whilst I was lying across from him on his bed..." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitaab al-Salah).

Mujaahid, Taawoos and Maalik thought it makrooh to pray facing someone who was sleeping, lest he expose something that would distract the worshipper from his prayer. (Fath al-Baari, ibid.)

If there is no risk of that happening, then it is not makrooh to pray behind someone who is sleeping. And Allah knows best.

Not occupying oneself with smoothing the ground in front of one

Al-Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him) reported from Mu'ayqeeb (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said concerning a man's smoothing the ground when he prostrates, "If you have to do that, then do it only once." (Fath al-Baari, 3/79).

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not wipe (the ground) when you are praying, but if you have to, then do it only once." (Reported by Abu Dawood, no. 946; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 7452).

The reason for this prohibition is so as to maintain khushoo', and so that a person will not make too many extra movements in prayer. If the place where one is going to prostrate needs to be smoothed, it is better to do this before starting to pray.

This also applies to wiping the forehead or nose when praying. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to prostrate in water and mud, which would leave traces on his forehead, but he did not bother to wipe it off every time he raised his head from sujood. It remained there because he was so deeply absorbed in his prayer and his khushoo' was so strong that he took not notice of it. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Prayer is an occupation in itself." (Reported by al-Bukhari, Fath al-Baari, 3/72). Ibn Abi Shaybah reported that Abu'l-Darda' said: "Even if I were to get red camels, I would not like to wipe the gravel from my forehead." 'Ayaad said: "The salaf did not like to wipe their foreheads before they finished praying." (al-Fath, 3/79).

Just as a worshipper should avoid anything that will distract him from his prayer, by the same token he should avoid disturbing others. This includes:

Not disturbing others with one's recitation

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "All of you are speaking to your Lord, so do not disturb one another, and do not raise your voices above one another when reciting" or he said, "in prayer." (Reported by Abu Dawood, 2/83; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 752). According to another report, he said, "Do not compete with one another in raising your voices when reciting Qur'an." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/36; Sahih al-Jaami', 1951).

Not turning around during prayer

Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'Allah continues to turn towards His slave whilst he is

praying, so long as he does not turn away, but if he turns away, [Allah] turns away from him." (Reported by Abu Dawood, no. 909; Sahih Abi Dawood).

Turning away during prayer is of two types:

The turning away of the heart to something other than Allah.

The turning away of the eyes.

Both of them are not allowed, and are detrimental to the reward for the prayer. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked about turning away during prayer, and he said: "It is something that Shaytan steals from a person's prayer." (Reported by al-Bukhari, Kitaab al-Adhaan, Baab al-Iltilfaat fi'l-Salah).

The one who turns away with his heart or his eyes during prayer is like a man who is called by the ruler and made to stand before him, and when the ruler starts to address him, he turns away, looking to the right and the left, not listening to what the ruler is saying and not understanding a word of it, because his heart and mind are elsewhere. What does this man think the ruler will do to him?

The least that he deserves is that when he leaves the ruler, he is hated and no longer valued. One who prays like this is not equal to one who prays with the proper presence of mind, turning to Allah in his prayer in such a way that he feels the greatness of the One before Whom he is standing, and he is filled with fear and submission; he feels too shy before his Lord to turn to anyone else or to turn away. The difference between their prayers is as Hassaan ibn 'Atiyah said: "The two men may be in one congregation, but the difference in virtue between them is as great as the distance between heaven and earth. One of them is turning with all his heart towards Allah, whilst the other is negligent and forgetful." (Al-Waabil al-Sayib by Ibn al-Qayyim, Daar al-Bayaan, p. 36).

As for turning away for a genuine reason, this is OK. Abu Dawood reported that Sahl ibn al-Hanzaliyyah said: "We started praying – Salaat al-Subh (Fajr) – and the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was looking at the ravine." Abu Dawood said: "He had sent a horseman at night to guard the ravine." This is like when he carried Umaamah bint Abi'l-'Aas, and when he opened the door for 'Aa'ishah, and when he came down from the minbar whilst praying in order to teach them, and when he stepped back during Salaat al-Kusoof (prayer at the time of an eclipse), and when he grabbed and strangled the Shaytan when he wanted to interrupt his prayer. He also ordered that snakes and scorpions should be killed even during prayer, and a person who is praying should stop and even fight one who wants to pass in front of him whilst he is praying. He told women to clap during prayer [if they spot a mistake on the part of the imam], and he used to wave or gesture to people who greeted him whilst he was praying. These and other actions may be done in cases of necessity, but if there is no necessity, then they are just idle gestures that

cancel out Khushoo' and are therefore not allowed during prayer. (Majmoo' al-Fataawa, 22/559).

Not raising one's gaze to the heavens

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade us to do this and issued a warning against it. He said: "When any one of you is praying, he should not lift his gaze to the heavens, lest he lose his sight." (Reported by Ahmad, 5/294; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 762). According to another report, he said: "What is wrong with people who lift their gaze to the heavens whilst they are praying?" According to another report, he said: "that they raise their gaze when they make du'a' during Salah?" (Reported by Muslim, no. 429). He spoke out strongly against it, to the extent that he said, "Let them stop it, or their eyesight will be taken away." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 5/258; Sahih al-Jaami', 5574).

Not spitting in front of one when praying

This is incompatible with khushoo' and good manners before Allah. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "When any one of you is praying, let him not spit in front of himself, for Allah is before him when he prays." (Reported by al-Bukhari in his Sahih, no. 397).

He also said: "When any one of you stands up to pray, he should not spit in front of himself, because he is talking to Allah – may He be blessed and exalted – as long as he is in his prayer place; and he should not [spit] to his right, because there is an angel on his right. He should spit to his left, or beneath his feet, and bury it." (Reported by al-Bukhari, al-Fath, no. 416, 1/512).

He said: "When one of you stands to pray, he is talking to his Lord, and his Lord is between him and the qiblah, so none of you should spit in the direction of his qiblah, but to his left or under his feet." (Reported by al-Bukhari, al-Fath al-Baari, no. 417, 1/513).

If the mosque is furnished with carpets and so on, as is the norm nowadays, if a person needs to spit, he can take out a handkerchief or whatever, spit into it, and put it away again.

Trying not to yawn when praying

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "If any one of you feels the urge to yawn during prayer, let him suppress it as much as he can, lest the Shaytan enter..." (Reported by Muslim, 4/2293). If the Shaytan enters, he will be more able to disturb the worshipper's khushoo', in addition to laughing at him when he yawns.

Not putting one's hands on one's hips when praying

Abu Hurayrah said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade putting the hands on the hips during prayer." (Reported by Abu Dawood, no. 947; Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitaab al-'Aml fi'l-Salah, Baab al-Hadhr fi'l-Salah).

Ziyaad ibn Subayh al-Hanafi said: "I prayed beside Ibn 'Umar and I put my hand on my hip, but he struck my hand. When he had finished praying, he said, "This is crossing in prayer. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to forbid this." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/106 and others. Classed as Sahih by al-Haafiz al-'Iraaqi in Takhreej al-Ihya' al-Mawta'. See al-Irwaa', 2/94).

It was reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said that this posture is how the people of Hell rest; we seek refuge with Allah from that. (Reported by al-Bayhaqi from Abu Hurayrah. Al-'Iraaqi said, its isnaad appears to be Sahih).

Not letting one's clothes hang down (sagl) during prayer

It was reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade letting one's clothes hang down during prayer or for a man to cover his mouth. (Reported by Abu Dawood, no. 643; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 6883. He said, this is a hasan hadeeth). In 'Awn al-Ma'bood (2/347) al-Khattaabi said: "Al-sagl: letting one's clothes hang down all the way to the ground." It was reported in Marqaat al-Mafaateeh (2/236): "Al-sagl is completely forbidden because it has to do with showing off, and in prayer it is even worse." The author of al-Nihaayah said: "It means wrapping oneself up in one's garment, leaving one's hands inside and bowing and prostrating in it." It was said that the Jews used to do this. It was also said that al-sagl meant putting the garment over one's head or shoulders, and letting its edges come down in front and over one's upper arms, so that a person will be preoccupied in taking care of it, which reduces khushoo', unlike garments that are tied up properly or buttoned, which do not distract the worshipper or affect his khushoo'. These kinds of clothes are still to be found nowadays in some parts of Africa and elsewhere, and in the way some Arabian cloaks are worn, which distract the worshipper and keep him busy adjusting them, retying them if they become loose and so on. This should be avoided.

The reason why it is forbidden to cover one's mouth was explained by the scholars as being because that prevents a person from reciting Qur'an and doing sujood properly. (Marqaat al-Mafaateeh, 2/236).

Not resembling animals

Allah has honoured the son of Adam and created him in the best way, so it is shameful for the son of Adam to resemble or imitate animals. We have been forbidden to resemble or imitate a number of postures or movements of animals when we pray, because that is contrary to khushoo' or because it is ugly and does not befit the worshipper who is praying. For example, it was reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade three things in prayer: pecking like a crow, spreading one's forearms like a carnivore, or always praying in the same place like a camel keeping to its own territory. (Reported by Ahmad, 3/428). It was said that when a man always prays in the same place

in the mosque, making it his own, it is like a camel keeping to its own territory. (Al-Fath al-Rabaani, 4/91). According to another report: "He forbade me to peck like a cockerel, to sit like a dog or to turn like a fox." (Reported by Imam Ahmad, 2/311; Sahih al-Targheeb, no. 556).

This is what we were able to mention about the means of attaining Khushoo', so that we may strive for them, and about the things that detract from Khushoo', so that we can avoid them.

There is another issue that has to do with Khushoo', to which the scholars attached so much importance that it is worthy of mention here:

Good Manners at Home

Spreading kindness in the home.

'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'When Allah – may He be glorified – wills some good towards the people of a household, He introduces kindness among them.'" (Reported by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad, 6/71; Sahih al-Jaami', 303).

According to another report: "When Allah loves the people of a household, He introduces kindness among them." (Reported by Ibn Abi al-Dunya and others; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 1704). In other words, they start to be kind to one another. This is one of the means of attaining happiness in the home, for kindness is very beneficial between the spouses, and with the children, and brings results that cannot be achieved through harshness, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah loves kindness and rewards it in such a way that He does not reward for harshness or for anything else." (Reported by Muslim, Kitaab al-Birr wa'l-Sillah wa'l-Aadaab, no. 2592).

(22) Helping one's wife with the housework.

Many men think that housework is beneath them, and some of them think that it will undermine their status and position if they help their wives with this work.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), however, used to "sew his own clothes, mend his own shoes and do whatever other work men do in their homes." (Reported by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad, 6/121; Sahih al-Jaami', 4927).

This was said by his wife 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), when she was asked about what the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to do in his house; her response described what she herself had seen. According to another report, she said: "He was like any other human being: he would clean his clothes, milk his ewe and serve himself." (Reported by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad, 6/256; al-Silsilat al-Sahihah, 671). She (may Allah be pleased with her) was also asked about what the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to do in his house, and she said, "He used to serve his family, then when the time for prayer came, he would go out to pray." (Reported by al-Bukhari, al-Fath, 2/162).

If we were to do likewise nowadays, we would achieve three things:

We would be following the example of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

We would be helping our wives

We would feel more humble, not arrogant.

Some men demand food instantly from their wives, when the pot is on the stove and the baby is screaming to be fed; they do not pick up the child or wait a little while for the food. Let these Ahaadeeth be a reminder and a lesson.

Being affectionate towards and joking with the members of the family

Showing affection towards one's wife and children is one of the things that lead to creating an atmosphere of happiness and friendliness in the home. Thus the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) advised Jaabir to marry a virgin, saying, "Why did you not marry a virgin, so you could play with her and she could play with you, and you could make her laugh and she could make you laugh?" (The hadeeth is reported in a number of places in the Sahihayn, such as al-Bukhari, al-Fath, 9/121). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said: "Everything in which Allah's name is not mentioned is idleness and play, except for four things: a man playing with his wife..." (Reported by al-Nisaa'i in 'Ushrat al-Nisa', p. 87; also in Sahih al-Jaami'). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to treat his wife 'Aa'ishah affectionately when doing ghusl with her, as she (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger of Allah and I used to do ghusl together from one vessel, and he would pretend to take all the water so that I would say, 'Leave some for me, leave some for me,' – and both of them were in a state of janaabah (impurity). (Muslim bi Sharh al-Nawawi, 4/6).

The ways in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) showed affection towards young children are too famous to need mentioning. He often used to show his affection towards Hasan and Husayn, as mentioned above. This is probably one of the reason why the children used to rejoice when he came back from travelling; they would rush to welcome him, as reported in the Sahih hadeeth: "Whenever he came back from a journey, the children of his household would be taken out to meet him." He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to hug them close to him, as 'Abd-Allah ibn Ja'far said: "Whenever the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came back from a journey, we would be taken out to meet him. One day we met him, Hasan, Husayn and I. He carried one of us in front of him, and another on his back, until we entered Madeenah." (Sahih Muslim, 4/1885-2772; see the commentary in Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, 8/56).

Compare this with the situation in some miserable homes where there are no truthful jokes [i.e., jokes that do not involve lying], no affection and no mercy.

Whoever thinks that kissing his children goes against the dignity of fatherhood should read the following hadeeth: from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) kissed al-Hasan ibn 'Ali, and al-Aqra' ibn Haabis al-Tameemi was sitting with him. Al-Aqra' said: 'I have ten children and I have never kissed any one of them.' The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) looked at him and said: 'The one who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.'"

Resisting bad manners in the home.

Every member of the household is bound to have some bad characteristics, such as lying, backbiting, gossiping and so on. These bad characteristics have to be resisted and opposed. Some people think that corporal punishment is the only way to deal with such things. The following hadeeth is very educational on this topic: from 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: "If the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to know that one of his household had told a lie, he would try to ignore him until he repented." (See al-Musnad by Imam Ahmad, 6/152. The text of the hadeeth is also in Sahih al-Jaami', no. 4675).

It is clear from the hadeeth that turning away and forsaking a person by not speaking to them, rather than resorting to punishment, is effective in such circumstances, and may be more effective than physical punishment, so let parents and caregivers think about this.

"Hang up the whip where the members of the household can see it."

(Reported by Abu Na'eem in al-Hilyah, 7/332; al-Silsilat al-Sahihah, no. 1446).

Hinting at punishment is an effective means of discipline, so the reason for hanging up a whip or stick in the house was explained in another report, where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Hang up the whip where the members of the household can see it, for this is more effective in disciplining them." (Reported by al-Tabarani, 10/344-345; al-Silsilat al-Sahihah, no. 1447)

Seeing the means of punishment hanging up will make those who have bad intentions refrain from indulging in bad behaviour, lest they get a taste of the punishment. It will motivate them to behave themselves and be well mannered. Ibn al-Anbaari said: "There is nothing to suggest that it should be used for hitting, because [the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)] did not command anyone to do that. What he meant was: keep on disciplining them." (See Fayd al-Qadeer by al-Mannaawi, 4/325).

Hitting is not the way to discipline; it is not to be resorted to, except when all other means are exhausted, or when it is needed to force someone to do obligatory acts of obedience, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): "... As to those women on whose part you fear ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful)..." [al-Nisa' 4:34] – in that order. There is also the hadeeth: "Order

your children to pray when they are seven years old, and hit them if they do not do so when they are ten." (Sunan Abi Dawood, 1/334; see also Irwa' al-Ghaleel, 1/266).

As for hitting unnecessarily, this is aggression. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) advised a woman not to marry a man because he always had his stick on his shoulder, i.e., he used to beat his wives. On the other hand, there are those who think that they should never use this method of discipline at all, following some kafir educational theories; this is also a mistaken opinion that goes against the sharee'ah.

Evils in the Home

Beware of non-mahrem relatives entering upon women when their husbands are absent.

Men and women should sit separately during family visits.

Be aware of the dangers of having male drivers and female servants in the house.

Kick immoral people out of your houses.

Beware of the dangers of TV and its effects and ability to influence family members.

Beware of the evils of the telephone.

You have to remove everything that contains symbols of the false religions of the kuffar or their gods and objects of worship.

Removing pictures of animate beings.

Do not allow smoking in your homes.

Do not keep dogs in your homes.

Avoid too much decoration in your homes (keep it simple).

The Home inside and out

Choosing a good location and design of home.

No doubt the true Muslim pays attention to the choice and design of a home in ways that others do not.

With regard to location, for example:

The home should be close to a mosque. This has obvious advantages: the call to prayer will remind people of prayer and wake them up for it; living close to the mosque will enable men to join the congregational prayers, women to listen to the Qur'an recitation and dhikr over the mosque's loudspeakers, and children to join study-circles for memorization of Qur'an, and so on.

The home should not be in a building where there are immoral people or in a compound where kuffaar live and where there is a mixed swimming pool and so on.

The house should not overlook others or be overlooked; if it is, he should put up curtains and make walls and fences higher.

With regard to design and lay out, for example:

He should pay attention to the matter of segregating men and women when non-mahrams come to visit, e.g. separate entrances and sitting areas. If that cannot be done, then use should be made of curtains, screens and so on.

Covering windows, so that neighbors or people in the street will not be able to see who is in the house, especially at night when the lights are on.

The toilets should not be sited in such a way that one faces the qiblah when using them.

Choosing a spacious house with plenty of amenities.

This is for a number of reasons:

"Allah loves to see the signs of His blessings on His slave." (Hadeeth narrated by al-Tirmidhi, no. 2819. He said: This is a hasan hadeeth).

"There are three elements of happiness and three elements of misery. The elements of happiness are: a righteous wife, who when you see her she pleases you, and when you are absent from her you feel that you can trust her with regard to herself and your wealth; a compliant riding-beast that helps you to keep up with your companions; and a house that is spacious and has plenty of amenities. The elements of misery are: a wife who when you see her you feel upset, she keeps attacking you verbally, and when you are absent from her you do not feel that you can trust her with regard to herself and your wealth; a stubborn riding-beast that if whip it, you get tired, and if you do not whip it, it does not help you to keep up with your companions; and a house with few amenities." (Hadeeth narrated by al-Haakim, 3/262; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 3056).

Paying attention to health-related matters such as ventilation, natural light and so on. These matters depend on financial ability and feasibility.

Choosing the neighbor before the house.

This is a matter, which has to be singled out for discussion because of its importance.

Nowadays neighbors have more impact on one another, because houses are closer together and people live together in buildings, apartments and compounds.

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told us of four causes of happiness, one of which is a righteous neighbor, and four causes of misery, one of which is a bad neighbor. (Reported by Abu Na'eem in al-Hilyah, 8/388; Sahih al-Jaami', 887). Because of the seriousness of the latter, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to seek refuge with Allah from bad neighbours in his du'a': "Allahumma innee a'oodhu bika min jaar al-soo' fi daar il-muqaamah fa inna jaar al-baadiyah yatahawwil (O Allah, I seek refuge with You from a bad neighbour in my permanent home, for the neighbour in the desert [i.e. on a journey] moves on)." He commanded the Muslims to seek refuge with Allah from a bad neighbour in a permanent home because the neighbour in the

desert will eventually move on. (Reported by al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad, no. 117; Sahih al-Jaami', 2967).

There is no room here to talk about the influence a bad neighbor may have on a couple and their children, or the kinds of nuisance he can cause, or the misery of living next to him. But applying these Ahaadeeth quoted above to one's own life should be sufficient for the one who is possessed of understanding. Another practical solution is that implemented by some good people who rent neighboring homes for their families, so as to solve the neighbor problem. This may be an expensive solution, but a good neighbor is priceless.

Paying attention to necessary repairs in the home, and making sure that the amenities are in good working order.

Among the blessings of Allah in this modern age are the "mod cons" that He has bestowed upon us, which make many things easier and save time, such as air-conditioners, fridge's, washing-machines and so on. It is wise to have the best quality of appliances that one can afford, without being extravagant or putting oneself under financial strain. We should also be careful to distinguish between useful extras and extravagant additions that have no real value.

Part of caring for the home includes fixing appliances and amenities that break down. Some people neglect these things, and their wives complain about homes crawling with vermin, with overflowing drains and piles of stinking garbage, filled with broken and worn out furniture.

No doubt this is one of the obstacles to happiness in the home, and causes problems in the marriage and health problems. The smart person is the one who hastens to fix these things. Paying attention to the family's health and safety procedures.

When any member of his family got sick, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would blow on them and recite al-Mi'wadhatayn (last two soorahs of the Qur'an). (Reported by Muslim, no. 2192).

When one of his family members got sick, he would call for soup, and it would be made for him, then he would tell them to drink it, and he would say, "It will strengthen the heart of the one who is grieving and cleanse (heal) the heart of the one who is sick just as any one of you wipes the dirt from her face." (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, no. 2039; Sahih al-Jaami', no. 4646).

One of the ways of taking safety precautions is:

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "When evening comes, keep your children inside, for the shayaateen (devils) spread out at that time. Then when an hour of the night has passed, let your children go, lock the doors and mention the name of Allah, cover your pots and mention the name of Allah, even if you only place a stick across the top of your vessel, and extinguish your lamps." (Reported by al-Bukhari, al-Fath, 10/88-89).

According to a report narrated by Muslim, he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Lock your doors, cover your vessels, extinguish your lamps and tie your knots properly [i.e., cover your jugs properly – in those days they would cover them with a piece of cloth and tie it], for the Shaytan does not open a door that is closed, or uncover something that is covered, or untie a knot that you tie. And the mouse could set the house on fire (i.e. it could pull out the wick of the lamp and set the house on fire)." (Reported by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad, 3/103); Sahih al-Jaami', 1080).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not leave fires lit in your houses when you go to sleep." (Reported by al-Bukhari, al-Fath, 11/85).

And Allah knows best.

May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad (saws)

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